

(second edition)

SALMAGUNDI;

OR, THE

WHIM-WHAMS AND OPINIONS

OF

LAUNCELOT LANGSTAFF, ESQ.

AND OTHERS.

In hoc est hoax, cum quiz et jokesez,

Et smokem, toastem, roastem folksez,

Fee, faw, fum.

Psalmanazar.

With baked, and broiled, and stewed, and toasted,

And fried, and boiled, and smoked, and roasted,

We treat the town.

NO. VII.

Saturday, April 4, 1807.

LETTER

FROM MUSTAPHA RUB-A-DUB KELI KHAN,

*To ASEM HACCHEM principal slave-driver to his
highness the Bashaw of Tripoli.*

I PROMISED in a former letter, good Asem, that I would furnish thee with a few hints respecting the nature of the government by which I am held in durance.—Though my inquiries for that purpose have been industrious, yet I am not perfectly satisfied with their results, for thou mayest easily imagine that the vision of a captive is overshadowed by the mists of illusion and prejudice, and the horizon of his speculations must be limited indeed.

I find that the people of this country are strangely at a loss to determine the nature and proper character of their government. Even their dervises are extremely in the dark as to this particular, and are continually indulging in the most preposterous

disquisitions on the subject; some have insisted that it savors of an *aristocracy*; others maintain that it is a *pure* democracy; and a third set of theorists declare absolutely that it is nothing more nor less than a *mobocracy*. The latter, I must confess, though still wide in error, have come nearest to the truth. You of course must understand the meaning of these different words, as they are derived from the ancient greek language, and bespeak loudly the verbal poverty of these poor infidels, who cannot utter a learned phrase without laying the dead languages under contribution. A man, my dear Asem, who talks good sense in his native tongue, is held in tolerable estimation in this country; but a fool, who clothes his feeble ideas in a foreign or antique garb, is bowed down to as a literary prodigy. While I conversed with these people in plain english I was but little attended to, but the moment I prosed away in greek, every one looked up to me with veneration as an oracle.

Although the dervises differ widely in the particulars above-mentioned, yet they all agree in terming their government one of the most *pacific* in the known world. I cannot help pitying their ignorance and smiling, at times, to see into what ridiculous errors those nations will wander who are unenlightened by the precepts of Mahomet, our divine prophet, and uninstructed by the five hundred and forty-nine books of wisdom of the immortal Ibrahim Hassan al Fusti. To call this nation *pacific*! most preposterous! it reminds me of the title assumed by the Sheck of that murderous tribe of wild arabs, that desolate the valleys of Belsaden, who styles himself **STAR OF COURTESY—BEAM OF THE MERCY SEAT!**

The simple truth of the matter is, that these people are totally ignorant of their own true character ; for, according to the best of my observation, they are the most warlike, and I must say, the most savage nation, that I have as yet discovered among all the barbarians. They are not only at war (in their own way) with almost every nation on earth, but they are at the same time engaged in the most complicated knot of civil wars that ever infested any poor unhappy country on which ALLAH has denounced his malediction !

To let thee at once into a secret, which is unknown to these people themselves, their government is a pure unadulterated LOGOCRACY or *government of words*. The whole nation does every thing *viva voce*, or by word of mouth, and in this manner is one of the most military nations in existence. Every man who has, what is here called, the *gift of the gab*, that is a plentiful stock of verbosity, becomes a soldier outright and is forever in a militant state. The country is intirely defended *vi et lingua*, that is to say, by *force of tongues*. The account which I lately wrote to our friend the snorer, respecting the immense army of six hundred men, makes nothing against this observation ; that formidable body being kept up, as I have already observed, only to amuse their fair country women by their splendid appearance and nodding plumes, and are, by way of distinction, denominated the "*defenders of the fair*."

In a logocracy thou well knowest there is little or no occasion for fire arms, or any such destructive weapons. Every offensive or defensive measure is enforced by *wordy battle*, and *paper war* ; he who has the longest tongue, or readiest quill, is

sure to gain the victory—will carry horror, abuse, and *ink-shed* into the very trenches of the enemy, and without mercy or remorse, put men, women, and children, to the point of the—pen!

There are still preserved in this country some remains of that gothic spirit of knight-errantry, which so much annoyed the faithful in the middle ages of the Hegira. As, notwithstanding their martial disposition, they are a people much given to commerce and agriculture and must, necessarily, at certain seasons be engaged in these employments, they have accommodated themselves by appointing knights, or constant warriors, incessant brawlers, similar to those, who, in former ages, swore eternal enmity to the followers of our divine prophet.—These knights denominated editors or SLANG-WHANGERS are appointed in every town, village and district, to carry on both foreign and internal warfare, and may be said to keep up a constant firing “in words.” Oh, my friend, could you but witness the enormities sometimes committed by these tremendous slang-whangers, your very turban would rise with horror and astonishment. I have seen them extend their ravages even into the kitchens of their opponents, and annihilate the very cook with a blast; and I do assure thee, I beheld one of these warriors attack a most venerable bashaw, and at one stroke of his pen lay him open from the waistband of his breeches to his chin!

There has been a civil war carrying on with great violence for some time past, in consequence of a conspiracy among the higher classes, to dethrone his highness, the present bashaw, and place another in his stead. I was mistaken when I formerly asserted to thee that this disaffection arose

from his wearing *red breeches*. It is true the nation have long held that colour in great detestation in consequence of a dispute they had some twenty years since with the barbarians of the british islands. The colour, however, is again rising into favour, as the ladies have transferred it to their heads from the bashaw's——body. The true reason, I am told, is that the bashaw absolutely refuses to believe in the deluge, and in the story of Balaam's ass ;—maintaining that this animal was never yet permitted to talk except in a genuine logocracy, where it is true his voice may often be heard, and is listened to with reverence, as “ the voice of the sovereign people.” Nay, so far did he carry his obstinacy that he absolutely invited a professed *antideluvian* from the gallic empire, who illuminated the whole country with his principles——and his *nose*. This was enough to set the nation in a blaze——every slang-whanger resorted to his tongue or his pen ; and for seven years have they carried on a most inhuman war, in which volumes of words have been expended, oceans of ink have been shed, nor has any mercy been shown to age, sex, or condition. Every day have these slang-whangers made furious attacks on each other, and upon their respective adherents, discharging their heavy artillery consisting of large sheets, loaded with scoundrel ! villain ! liar ! rascal ! numskull ! nincompoop ! dunderhead ! wiseacre ! blockhead ! jackass ! and I do swear by my beard, though I know thou wilt scarcely credit me that in some of these skirmishes the grand bashaw himself has been woefully pelted ! yea, most ignominiously pelted !—and yet have these talking desperadoes escaped without the bastinado !

Every now and then a slang-whanger, who has a longer head, or rather a *longer tongue* than the rest, will elevate his piece and discharge a shot quite across the ocean, levelled at the head of the Emperor of France, the king of England, or, (wouldst thou believe it, oh, Asem) even at his sublime highness the bashaw of Tripoli! these long pieces are loaded with single ball or langrage, as tyrant! usurper! robber! tyger! monster! and thou mayest well suppose, they occasion great distress and dismay in the camps of the enemy, and are marvellously annoying to the crowned heads at which they are directed. The slang-whanger, though perhaps the mere champion of a village, having fired off his shot, struts about with great self-congratulation, chuckling at the prodigious bustle he must have occasioned, and seems to ask of every stranger, "Well, sir, what do they think of me in Europe."* This is sufficient to show you the manner in which these bloody, or rather *windy* fellows fight; it is the only mode allowable in a *Logocracy* or government of words. I would also observe that their civil wars have a thousand ramifications.

NOTE, BY WILLIAM WIZARD, ESQ.

* The sage Mustapha, when he wrote the above paragraph, had probably in his eye the following anecdote, related either by Linkum Fidelius, or Josephus Millerius, vulgarly called Joe Miller—of facetious memory.

The captain of a slave-vessel, on his first landing on the coast of Guinea, observed, under a palm-tree, a negro chief sitting most majestically on a stump, while two women, with wooden spoons, were administering

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While the fury of the battle rages in the metropolis, every little town and village has a distinct broil, growing like excrescences out of the grand national altercation, or rather agitating within it, like those complicated pieces of mechanism where there is a "wheel within a wheel."

But in nothing is the verbose nature of this government more evident, than in its grand national divan, or congress, where the laws are framed; this is a blustering windy assembly where every thing is carried by noise, tumult and debate; for thou must know, that the members of this assembly do not meet together to find wisdom in the multitude of counsellors, but to wrangle, call each other hard names, and hear *themselves talk*. When the congress opens, the bashaw first sends them a long message (i. e. a huge mass of words—*vox et preterea nihil*) all meaning nothing; because it only tells them what they perfectly know already. Then the whole assembly are thrown into a ferment, and have a *long talk*, about the quantity of words that are to be returned in answer to this message; and here arises many disputes about the correction and alteration of "*if so be's*," and "*how so ever's*." A month,

his favourite pottage of boiled rice, which, as his imperial majesty was a little greedy, would part of it escape the place of destination and run down his chin. The watchful attendants were particularly careful to intercept these scape-grace particles, and return them to their proper port of entry. As the captain approached, in order to admire this curious exhibition of royalty, the great chief clapped his hands to his sides, and saluted his visitor with the following pompous question, "Well, sir! what do they say of me in England?"

perhaps, is spent in thus determining the precise number of words the answer shall contain, and then another most probably, in concluding whether it shall be carried to the bashaw on foot, on horseback, or in coaches. Having settled this weighty matter, they next fall to work upon the message itself, and hold as much chattering over it as so many magpies over an addled egg. This done they divide the message into small portions, and deliver them into the hands of little juntos of *talkers*, called committees: these juntos have each a world of talking about their respective paragraphs, and return the results to the grand divan, which forthwith falls to and *re-talks* the matter over more earnestly than ever. Now after all it is an even chance that the subject of this prodigious arguing, quarrelling, and talking, is an affair of no importance, and ends intirely in smoke. May it not then be said, the whole nation have been talking to no purpose? the people, in fact seem to be somewhat conscious of this propensity to talk, by which they are characterized, and have a favourite proverb on the subject, viz. "all talk and no cider;" this is particularly applied when their congress (or assembly of all the sage chatterers of the nation) have chattered through a whole session, in a time of great peril and momentous event, and have done nothing but exhibit the length of their tongues and the emptiness of their heads. This has been the case more than once, my friend; and to let thee into a secret, I have been told in confidence, that there have been absolutely several old women smuggled into congress from different parts of the empire; who, having once got on the breeches, as thou mayest well imagine, have taken the lead in debate, and overwhelmed the whole assembly with

their garrulity; for my part, as times go, I do not see why old women should not be as eligible to public councils as old men, who possess their dispositions—they certainly are eminently possessed of the qualifications requisite to govern in a logocracy.

Nothing, as I have repeatedly insisted, can be done in this country without talking; but they take so long to talk over a measure, that by the time they have determined upon adopting it, the period has elapsed, which was proper for carrying it into effect. Unhappy nation—thus torn to pieces by intestine talks! never, I fear, will it be restored to tranquility and silence. Words are but breath—breath is but air; and air put into motion is nothing but wind. This vast empire, therefore, may be compared to nothing more nor less than a mighty windmill, and the orators, and the chatterers, and the slang-whangers, are the breezes that put it in motion; unluckily, however, they are apt to blow different ways, and their blasts counteracting each other—the mill is perplexed, the wheels stand still, the grist is unground, and the miller and his family starved.

Every thing partakes of the windy nature of the government. In case of any domestic grievance, or an insult from a foreign foe, the people are all in a buzz—town-meetings are immediately held, where the quidnuncs of the city repair, each like an atlas, with the cares of the whole nation upon his shoulders, each resolutely bent upon saving his country, and each swelling and strutting like a turkey-cock; puffed up with words, and wind, and nonsense. After bustling, and buzzing, and bawling for some time; and after each man has shown himself to be indubitably the greatest personage in

the meeting, they pass a string of resolutions (i. e. *words*) which were *previously prepared* for the purpose; these resolutions are whimsically denominated the *sense* of the meeting, and are sent off for the instruction of the reigning bashaw, who receives them graciously, puts them into his red breeches pocket, forgets to read them—and so the matter ends.

As to his highness, the present bashaw, who is at the very top of the logocracy, never was a dignitary better qualified for his station. He is a man of superlative ventosity, and comparable to nothing but a huge bladder of wind. He *talks* of vanquishing all opposition by the force of reason and philosophy; throws his gauntlet at all the nations of the earth and defies them to meet him—on the field of argument!—is the national dignity insulted, a case in which his highness of Tripoli would immediately call forth his forces—the bashaw of America—utters a *speech*. Does a foreign invader molest the commerce in the very mouth of the harbours, an insult which would induce his highness of Tripoli to order out his fleets—his highness of America—utters a *speech*. Are the *free* citizens of America dragged from on board the vessels of their country and forcibly detained in the war ships of another power—his highness—utters a *speech*. Is a peaceable citizen killed by the marauders of a foreign power, on the very shores of his country—his highness utters a *speech*. Does an alarming insurrection break out in a distant part of the empire—his highness utters a *speech*!—nay, more, for here he shows his “energies”—he most intrepidly dispatches a courier on horseback, and orders him to ride one hundred and twenty miles a day,

with a most formidable army of *proclamations*, (i. e. a collection of words) packed up in his saddle bags. He is instructed to show no favor nor affection ; but to charge the thickest ranks of the enemy and to speechify and batter by words the conspiracy and the conspirators out of existence. Heavens, my friend, what a deal of blustering is here ! it reminds me of a dunghill cock in a farm-yard, who, having accidentally in his scratchings found a worm, immediately begins a most vociferous cackling—calls around him his *hen-hearted* companions, who run chattering from all quarters to gobble up the poor little worm that happened to turn under his eye. Oh, Asem, Asem ! on what a prodigious great scale is every thing in this country !

Thus, then, I conclude my observations. The infidel nations have each a separate characteristic trait, by which they may be distinguished from each other :—the spaniards, for instance, may be said to *sleep* upon every affair of importance—the italians to *fiddle* upon every thing—the french to *dance* upon every thing—the germans to *smoke* upon every thing—the british islanders to *eat* upon every thing,—and the *windy* subjects of the american logocracy to *talk* upon every thing.

Ever thine,

MUSTAPHA.

FROM THE MILL OF
PINDAR COCKLOFT, ESQ.

How oft in musing mood my heart recalls,
From grey-beard father Time's oblivious halls,
The modes and maxims of my early day,
Long in those dark recesses stow'd away :
Drags once more to the cheerful realms of light
Those buckram fashions, long since lost in night,
And makes, like Endor's witch, once more to rise
My grogam grandames to my raptured eyes !

Shades of my fathers ! in your pasteboard skirts,
Your broidered waistcoats and your plaited shirts,
Your formal bag-wigs—wide-extended cuffs,
Your five inch chitterlings and nine inch ruffs.
Gods ! how ye strut, at times, in all your state,
Amid the visions of my thoughtful pate !
I see ye move the solemn *minuet* o'er,
The modest foot scarce rising from the floor ;
No thundering *rigadoon* with boisterous prance,
No *pigeon-wing* disturb your *contra-dance*.
But silent, as the gentle Lethe's tide,
Adown the festive maze ye peaceful glide !

Still in my mental eye each dame appears—
Each modest beauty of departed years ;

Close by mamma I see her stately march,
Or sit, in all the majesty of starch ;—
When for the dance a stranger seeks her hand
I see her doubting, hesitating, stand,
Yield to his claim with most fastidious grace,
And sigh for her *intended* in his place !

Ah golden days ! when every gentle fair
On sacred sabbath conn'd with pious care
Her holy bible, or her prayer-book o'er,
Or studied honest Bunyan's drowsy lore.
Travell'd with him the PILGRIM'S PROGRESS through,
And storm'd the famous town of MAN-SOUL too—
Beat *eye* and *ear-gate* up with thundring jar,
And fought triumphant through the HOLY WAR ;
Or if perchance, to lighter works inclined,
They sought with *novels* to relax the mind,
Twas GRANDISON's politely formal page,
Or CLELIA or PAMELA were the rage.

No plays were then—theatrics were unknown—
A learned pig—a dancing monkey shown—
The feats of Punch—a cunning juggler's slight,
Were sure to fill each bosom with delight.
An honest, simple, humdrum race we were,
Undazzled yet by fashion's wildering glare,
Our manners unreserved, devoid of guile,
We knew not then the modern monster *style*,
Style, that with pride each empty bosom swells,
Puffs, boys to manhood, little girls to *belles*.

Scarce from the nursery freed, our gentle fair
 Are yielded to the dancing-master's care ;
 And e'er the head one mite of sense can gain,
 Are introduced mid folly's frippery train.
 A stranger's grasp no longer gives alarms,
 Our fair surrender to their very arms,
 And in the insidious *Waltz* (1) will swim and twine,
 And whirl and languish tenderly divine !
 Oh, how I hate this loving, hugging, dance,
 This imp of Germany—brought up in France ;
 Nor can I see a niece its windings trace,
 But all the honest blood glows in my face.
 "Sad, sad refinement this," I often say,
 "Tis modesty indeed refined away !
 "Let France its whim, its sparkling wit supply,
 "The easy grace that captivates the eye,
 "But curse their *Waltz*—their loose lascivious arts,
 "That smooth our manners, to corrupt our hearts ! (2)
 Where now those books, from which in days of yore
 Our mothers gained their literary store ?
 Alas ! stiff skirted Grandison gives place
 To novels of a new and *rakish* race ;
 And honest Bunyan's pious dreaming lore,
 To the lascivious rhapsodies of MOORE.

And, last of all, behold the mimic Stage
 Its morals lend to *polish* off the age,
 With flimsy farce, a comedy miscall'd,
 Garnish'd with vulgar cant, and proverbs bald,

With puns most puny, and a plenteous store
Of smutty jokes, to catch a gallery roar.
Or see, more fatal, graced with every art
To charm and captivate the female heart,
The false, "the gallant, gay Lothario" smiles, (3)
And loudly boasts his base seductive wiles,—
In glowing colours paints Calista's wrongs,
And with voluptuous scenes the tale prolongs.
When COOPER lends his fascinating powers,
Decks vice itself in bright alluring flowers,
Pleased with his manly grace, his youthful fire,
Our fair are lured the villain to admire ;
While humbler virtue, like a stalking horse,
Struts clumsily and croaks in honest MORSE.

Ah, hapless days ! when trials thus combin'd,
In pleasing garb assail the female mind ;
When every smooth insidious snare is spread
To sap the morals and delude the head !
Not Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego,
To prove their faith and virtue here below,
Could more an angel's helping hand require
To guide their steps uninjured through the fire,
Where had but heaven its guardian aid deny'd,
The holy trio in the proof had died.
If, then, *their* manly vigour sought supplies
From the bright stranger in celestial guise,

Alas ! can we from feebleness claim,
To brave seduction's ordeal, free from blame :
To pass through fire unhurt like golden ore,
Though ANGEL MISSIONS bless the earth no more !

NOTES, BY WILLIAM WIZARD, ESQ.

I *Waltz*] As many of the retired matrons of this city, unskilled in "gestic lore," are doubtless ignorant of the movements and figures of this modest exhibition, I will endeavour to give some account of it, in order that they may learn what odd capers their daughters sometimes cut when from under their gaurdian wings.

On a signal being given by the music, the gentleman seizes the lady round her waist—the lady, scorning to be outdore in courtesy, very politely takes the gentleman round the neck, with one arm resting against his shoulder to prevent encroachments. Away then they go, about and about and about—"about what, sir?"—about the room, madam, to be sure. The whole economy of this dance consists in turning round and round the room in a certain measured step : and it is truly astonishing that this continued revolution does not set all their heads swimming like a top ; but I have been positively assured that it only occasions a gentle sensation which is marvelously agreeable. In the course of this circumnavigation, the dancers, in order to give the charm of variety, are continually changing their relative situations—now the gentlemen, meaning no harm in the world, I assure you, madam, carelessly flings his arm about the lady's neck, with an air of celestial impudence, and anon, the lady, meaning as little harm as the gentleman, takes him round the waist with most ingenuous modest languishment, to the great delight of numerous spectators and amateurs, who generally form a ring, as the mob do about a pair of amazons pulling caps, or a couple of fighting mastiffs.

After continuing this divine interchange of hands, arms, *et cetera*, for half an hour or so, the lady begins to tire, and with "eyes upraised," in most bewitching languor petitions her partner for a little more support. This is always given without hesitation. The lady leans gently on his shoulder, their arms intertwine in a thousand seducing mischievous curves——dont be alarmed, madam——closer and closer they approach each other, and in conclusion, the parties being overcome with ecstatic fatigue, the lady seems almost sinking into the gentleman's arms, and then,——"Well, sir! and what then?"——lord, madam, how should I know!

2] My friend Pindar, and in fact our whole junto, has been accused of an unreasonable hostility to the french nation: and I am informed by a parisian correspondent, that our first number played the very devil in the court of St. Cloud. His Imperial majesty got into a most outrageous passion, and being withal a waspish little gentleman, had nearly kicked his bosom friend, Talleyrand, out of the cabinet, in the paroxisms of his wrath. He insisted upon it that the nation was assailed in its most vital part; being, like Achilles, extremely sensitive to any attacks upon the *heel*. When my correspondent sent off his dispatches, it was still in doubt what measures would be adopted; but it was strongly suspected that vehement representations would be made to our government. Willing, therefore, to save our executive from any embarrasment on the subject, and above all, from the disagreeable alternative of sending an *apology* by the HORNET, we do assure mr Jefferson, that there is nothing farther from our thoughts than the subversion of the gallic empire, or any attack on the interests, tranquility, or reputation of the nation at large, which we seriously declare possesses the highest rank in our estimation. Nothing less than the national welfare could have induced us to trouble ourselves with this explanation; and in the name of the junto, I once more declare, that when we toast a frenchman, we merely

mean one of these *inconnus*, who swarmed to this country, from the kitchens and barber's shops of Nantz, Bordeaux and Marseilles—played game of *leap frog*, at all our balls and assemblies—set this unhappy town *hop-ping mad*—and passed themselves off on our tender-hearted damsels for *unfortunate noblemen*—ruined in the revolution ! such only can wince at the lash, and accuse us of severity ; and we should be mortified in the extreme if they did not feel our well intended castigation.

3 *Fair Penitent*] The story of this play, if told in its native language, would exhibit a scene of guilt and shame, which no modest ear could listen to without shrinking with disgust ; but, arrayed as it is in all the splendour of harmonious, rich, and polished verse, it steals into the heart like some gay luxurious smooth-faced villain, and betrays it insensibly to immorality and vice ; our very sympathy is enlisted on the side of guilt, and the piety of Altamont, and the gentleness of Lavinia, are lost in the splendid debaucheries of the “gallant gay Lothario,” and the blustering, hollow repentance of the fair Calista, whose sorrow reminds us of that of Pope's Heloise—“ I mourn the lover, not lament the fault.” Nothing is more easy than to banish such plays from our stage. Were our ladies, instead of crowding to see them again and again repeated, to discourage their exhibition by absence, the stage would soon be indeed the school of morality, and the number of “ Fair Penitents,” in all probability, diminish.

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